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by Bede Griffiths

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Editor
EDWARD S. SKILLIN

Managing Editor
JAMES O'GARA

Associate Editors
JAMES FINN
RICHARD HORCHLER

Drama Critic: RICHARD HAYES; *Movie Critic:* PHILIP T. HARTUNG; *Social Action:* JOHN C. CORT; *Paris:* ROBERT BARRAT; *Rome:* GUNNAR D. KUMLIEN; *Great Britain:* MICHAEL P. FOGARTY

JOHN BRUBAKER: *Advertising Manager*

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

CHRISTMAS IN THE CITY

WINTER CAME EARLY to New York this year, as it did to most of the country, and it looks as if it will be a white Christmas. The big tree is up at Rockefeller Plaza, the Santa Clauses are out, crib scenes are scattered around and the windows of the big stores are more beautiful than ever. Aside from these visible signs of Christmas, though, life goes on much as usual here.

When the strike-bound papers stopped publishing, New Yorkers were reading details of another civic scandal, involving as-yet-unproved charges that some of the city's building inspectors took bribes to overlook health and safety violations in slum districts. Looking at the on-the-spot pictures, it is hard to believe that men who know what it means to live in the slums of New York would try to make a few more dollars out of the misery of the poor. But when it comes to that, how can any of us explain the fact that slums have come to be an accepted part of American life?

The real scandal is that slums are not thought of as needing any explanation. Every year, they are just there, like the Santa Claus on the corner; they are part of life. We surround children with ugliness from the moment of birth and then wonder why they do not grow up to love the good, the true and the beautiful. Yet the strange thing is not the number who become warped and twisted and full of violence; the miracle is that so many come out whole and good.

Slums should be an intolerable affront to the national conscience, and perhaps they would be if only people would open their eyes. But the truth about our nation's slums is not pretty, and it is understandable enough that people should try to bury the reality. Christmas in particular is a time for lights and color and joy, and slums mean squalor and disease and decay. Yet at Christmas, above all, men's thoughts are turned to the Family at Bethlehem, and so there is no better time to speak of those families for whom our affluent society can find no room at the inn.

NEW YORK slums are terrible, but they are no worse than slums in Chicago or Detroit or Pittsburgh or any other major American city. In every one of these centers of commerce and culture, children will sleep this Christmas in firetraps that should have been torn down decades ago. In every one of them, families of six or eight will celebrate the Glad Tidings in one-room "apartments." In every one of them families will count themselves lucky because they managed to rent a vermin-infested flat in an already overcrowded tenement.

To those who know the slums this is an old story. Things get worse rather than better; our slums are spreading and our cities are decaying before our eyes. Indeed, despite the bright dreams of the planners, the probable shape of the city of the future is already visible: a desert of commercial buildings and slums, relieved here and there by oases called luxury apartments. And in this city there will be only two kinds of people: the very rich, who can afford to pay premium prices for room and cleanliness and safety, and the poor, who cannot afford to move.

In one sense, at least, the Federal housing program is a snare and a delusion. Seeing a few big projects, people think the problem of the slums has been faced and conquered. In reality, though, we have only nibbled around the edges of one of our most serious domestic needs. When it comes to television sets and automobiles and mink stoles, ours is an economy of abundance. Where housing is concerned, we live in an economy of scarcity: there is simply not enough decent housing to go

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around. For despite the self-deluding beliefs of the comfortable, the poor do not live six or eight to a room because they like to; they live in the slums because there is no place else for them to go.

As soon as the subject of slum clearance is raised, public officials and people in the building industry begin immediately to discuss the difficulties, the technical problems involved. They talk about how hard it is to secure long-range financing, they mention the great need for middle-class housing, they say luxury apartments are the answer because they will "filter down" to the poor. Such arguments do not impress us.

The technical difficulties this nation faced after Pearl Harbor make our housing problem seem insignificant; we solved them because we wanted to badly enough. The technical difficulties of getting a satellite into orbit are staggering; the United States managed to surmount them. The task of putting a man into outer space would have staggered our fathers; none of us doubts that the United States will accomplish it. When it comes to housing and slum clearance, we are convinced that the United States could solve its problems if only it wanted to badly enough—as badly, say, as we want to shoot at the moon or launch an atomic-powered airplane.

We could make a real start toward eliminating our slums; we could make our cities decent places for families to bring up their children; we could find the money and the skill and the imagination to do the job—if we really wanted to. Christmas is a good time to ask ourselves: do we want to do something about slums or don't we?

SOME OTHER AMERICANS

BY NOW THE initials P.O.A.U. must be familiar to most of the reading public, for the group to which the initials refer (Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State) has been very vocal in its criticism, particularly of Catholics. Since the heaviest criticism has been leveled at Catholics it has been left largely to them to point out the excesses of the P.O.A.U.'s highly parochial approach to American religious life. But a recent exchange of letters which appeared in the New York *Times* indicates again that the P.O.A.U. does not speak as the voice of a monolithic Protestantism.

The chaplain of Columbia University, Dr. John M. Krumm, recently delivered a sermon in which he attacked bigotry and, since he was addressing a non-Catholic group, particularly bigotry toward the Catholic Church. Although Dr. Krumm did not refer by name, or even initials, to P.O.A.U., the report of his sermon drew irritated defenses of that group. Mr. W. Stanley Rycroft, an official of the Presbyterian Church, wrote to the *Times* protesting that Dr. Krumm's "attack on P.O.A.U. was as unfair as it was uninformed" and that he had made "wild and unfounded accusations." As if to inform his readers, and Dr. Krumm, Mr. Rycroft stated the position of the P.O.A.U on several issues on which that organization had taken a critical stand. (All of them, interestingly, involved Catholics.)

Dr. Krumm's moderate reply was directed, we believe, to the central issues:

"I do not think I was 'uninformed' nor that the accusations were 'wild and unfounded.' It is not a matter of information. Mr. Rycroft's letter does not add to my information about the matter I discussed. The basic question between us . . . is one of interpretation of the facts.

"That organization [P.O.A.U.], and many of the Protestant leaders who support it, claim to be upholding the American Constitutional system and more especially the supposed doctrine of the separation of Church and State.

"My point is that this doctrine is a relatively recent discovery—in the exaggerated form in which it is now interpreted—in Protestant circles. Its current popularity among Protestants is primarily due, in my opinion, to anti-Catholic prejudice, and it is being used in what appears to me to be absurd ways.

"I am persuaded that P.O.A.U. is doing enormous harm to the cause of cooperation and understanding between Protestants and Roman Catholics by its exaggerated definition of the Church-State principle. . . ."

There is little to add to such a succinct isolation of the crucial issues and to the reasoned rejection of the attitudes behind the P.O.A.U. The understanding and cooperation of which Dr. Krumm wrote can take place only when both Catholics and Protestants approach the admittedly grave and difficult problems which face them with the calm reasonableness so clearly evident in Dr. Krumm's own approach to this question.

ECONOMY vs. EXPANSION

THE UNBROKEN SERIES of annual deficits which the Eisenhower Administration has racked up has been highly irksome to a regime

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which prides itself on being businesslike. It must have been particularly galling to the President to have had to ask Congress to raise the ceilings on the national debt. Circumstances have unquestionably been extenuating. The first two years reflected the extraordinary expenses incurred by the Korean war and financial commitments made previously by the Truman Administration. And, as the cold war intensified, defense expenditures mounted as the latest destructive mechanisms became steadily more costly. Nevertheless, the Administration succeeded in keeping the deficits from 1956 through June 1958 comparatively modest.

Only in the current fiscal year does the nation find government finances seriously out of hand—largely because of the recession. Shrinking tax revenues and large remedial expenditures were unavoidable. Whether the gap needed to be a full twelve billions is not directly at issue here. But Mr. Eisenhower and a majority of the Democrats in Congress (a number of them newly elected) have opposite strategies for the new budget.

For the President there is only one answer: economy. For the Democratic Advisory Council and many other Democrats the watchword is: expansion. There would seem to be two main lines for this debate, the economic and the socio-military. The liberal Democrats are making much of an analysis which concludes that the Gross National Product has risen only 1.3 per cent annually over the past six years. This has to be measured, they say, against such factors as our three million annual population growth and an average annual per capita productivity growth of three per cent. It has also to be compared with the four or five per cent annual G.N.P. increase found normal by the Committee for Economic Development and the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, respectively. (These Democrats would also bring forward the five per cent increases registered under the Truman Administration, but this hardly takes into sufficient account our pent-up postwar market for consumers' goods, or the Korean war.) What has, though, been holding things back?

The Eisenhower case is hardly a popular one, judging from the President's difficulties with the last Congress and the outcome of the elections. That is not to say that his plea for government economy is necessarily a mistaken one. Inflation is no problem to be taken lightly. In country after country it has gone hand in hand with big deficits and has attained proportions that are truly destructive. And government spending for public works takes time to stimulate business activity.

It would be difficult enough if balancing the budget and checking inflation were all. What makes it infinitely more complicated is that despite the deficit a number of crucial needs are simply not being met. Living conditions in many of our cities, the state of the nation's schools and deficiencies in our social security system demand still greater federal expenditures. Some increases (and modifications) are necessary in our programs of foreign aid. The defenses of the free world also call for greater capabilities for limited wars than provided in present budgetary plans.

Doubtless a deficit of present proportions is abhorrent both to Congressional liberals and conservatives, and to Democrats and Republicans alike. Such men as the President, Meade Alcorn of the Republican National Committee and Senator Byrd of Virginia (Dem.) would attack it primarily by economizing. Their opponents, apparently more intent on various national and world needs, are stressing policies they believe would utilize America's steady growth in population and in productivity per worker. The two forces are getting ready to meet head on.

If at this stage neither way offers adequate promise of meeting the deficit problem, the consequences have to be faced. The choices are limited: continuing big-deficit spending with worsening depreciation of the dollar, cut-backs far more drastic than those envisaged by Mr. Eisenhower, or even higher taxes. In view of the vital needs to be met, the last would appear to be preferable. It is said that higher tax rates for the individual citizen are not politically feasible. But it has yet to be demonstrated that, with inspiring leadership in Washington, the American people would not respond to a well-documented, convincing appeal for personal sacrifice—in view of all that is at stake.

NEWSPAPER STRIKE IN N.Y.

WHAT ARE the effects of a newspaper strike on a city like New York? What happens to the person to whom the morning *Times* is as habitual and necessary as that first cup of coffee? To the commuter who has relied on the *Tribune* day by day and trip by trip for many years? To those who depend on the *News*, the *World-Telegram* or the *Post*?

A hasty, empirical, unscientific survey has turned up a newspaper-strike syndrome. First there is a vague sense of unease and disquiet, amounting almost to guilt, for a long established pattern of

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behavior has been broken and the day seems somehow unfulfilled. But gradually, and surprisingly, this yields to a newer, as yet undefined feeling when the realization grows that no personal responsibility is involved. "It is not as if I *chose* not to read them." Relatively free from the knowledge of good and evil around the world, one indulges in a feeling of happy, innocent release. The day seems longer, conversation more relaxed, life less trying.

Alas, this is a transient, fleeting emotion. We are burdened by our knowledge, our history has conditioned us. We must know what is happening in Berlin. We have been waiting for the consistory in Rome and now we cannot read of it. The Middle East, China and Africa are part of our life, and events, we know, will not wait for us. Even at home we cannot be satisfied. Who would have thought that he would so have missed advertisements, or have felt so strongly that local politics are better when they are public? As for the arts, we don't even know what's at the neighborhood show; and when we did see the fine dramatic adaptation of Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* at the Phoenix Theater we couldn't find out if the critics recognized its merits.

The newsstands look barer each day. Radio and T.V. will not do. Their weaknesses are more exposed than ever. Newspapers, come back, we need you.

PROSPECT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

THE ADMINISTRATION'S program for 1959, according to Washington reports, will call for cautious, conservative fiscal policies, as expected, but will also propose new and broader civil rights legislation. President Eisenhower has already made it known that he wants an extension of the life of the federal Civil Rights Commission, which under present law will go out of business next September. Another likely proposal, mentioned more than once by Vice President Nixon, is a federal F.E.P.C. (Fair Employment Practices Commission). It is expected, too, that the President will call for broader powers for the Justice Department in cases involving racial discrimination in the schools.

The same reports explain that the Administration's strong stand on civil rights has been approved in Republican Party councils as a tactic designed to embarrass the Democrats and widen the Democratic split over civil rights. This may well be the case. Certainly a liberal civil rights position on the part of the President and his Administration would be an effective political stratagem. It would go a long way toward answering those who have criticized the President for his failure to provide "constructive leadership" in the integration controversy.

But we are not dismayed by the thought that political affairs are tainted by politics. How could it be otherwise? The important thing is that it has now become just about unanimous that more and more governmental efforts must be given to the solution of our civil rights problems. If it has become good politics, even in the most pragmatic sense, for both parties to take up the cause of full civil rights for all Americans, this is something to be thankful for. We await the developments of 1959, in this crucial area of our national life, with much interest and even some hope.

YES INDEED, VIRGINIA

YES, VIRGINIA, there is an Abominable Snowman. In fact, according to the very latest word on the subject, the Tibetan Himalayas are practically crawling with them, and you couldn't imagine a nicer, kinder group of men.

This glad news, just in time for Christmas, comes to us in a U.P.I. dispatch from Frankfurt. A German missionary just returned from thirteen years in Tibet has told reporters that he knows all about the Abominable Snowmen, has met one of them and has photographs to prove it. Actually, declared the missionary, the Snowmen are far from abominable, being saint-like recluses who devote their lives to healing, and the one he met had come down from the towering heights of the Himalayas to treat a sick child in a valley village.

We hope everyone is as pleased by this as we are. We're pleased by the rehabilitation of still another ogre, pleased with the Snowmen, pleased with the missionary—especially the gentle missionary. Take it from him, Virginia, there are Abominable Snowmen, and the world's a better place for them.

FOOTNOTE TO PAGE 339

WITH *our* apologies—to Frank Sullivan, the *New Yorker*, our favorite columnist himself, and Joyce Kilmer:

Only God can make a tree
But read the page by John Cog-ley.
And Merry Christmas.

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Christ and India

He alone is capable of reconciling the ancient tradition of religion in India with the demands of the modern mind

by BEDE GRIFFITHS

IT IS A MATTER of no little interest that Christmas should be a public holiday in India. It means that Christmas takes its place among those Hindu and Moslem festivals which mark the course of the year in India and are occasions for general rejoicing. It might be said that this means that it is accepted only as a social festival (as it is in so many places in the West now), but I think that it is more than that. There can be no doubt that Christ has entered now into the pattern of religious belief in India. One has only to think of the place which He occupied in the life and thought of Mahatma Gandhi. But, significantly, He is not the Christ of Easter—I have often found Hindus completely ignorant of the very idea of the Resurrection—but the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount. Christ is for them a great teacher, like the Krishna of the Bhagavadgita, (and it is worth remarking that it is just those aspects of His teaching which are almost ignored in the West that make the deepest appeal to the Indian mind, like the saying, "Resist not him that is evil").

But many a Hindu would go further than this and see in Christ an "avatar" like Krishna, that is a manifestation of God. Of course, this has a very different meaning in the Hindu mind from the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. A Hindu believes that God is continually manifesting Himself throughout the course of history. In a sense all the "gods" are to him but manifestations of the one supreme being, the "one without a second," who alone supremely "is." But he believes also that God has manifested himself from time to time in certain holy men, of whom Rama and Krishna are the great examples, and to these he is quite willing to add both Mohammed and Christ.

A perfect example of this is Ramakrihna, the great "saint" of modern Hinduism, to whom it owes more than to any other man, and who is himself regarded by many as an "incarnation." He was a Hindu of the Hindus, brought up in the purest tradition of Hinduism, but later in his life he deliberately set himself to "become" a Christian and a Moslem, that is to meditate on Christ and Mohammed as avatars and so embrace, as he thought, both Christianity and Islam in his religion. This is enough to show the difficulty of preaching the Christian faith in India. It is always in danger of simply being absorbed in Hinduism, just as in the early centuries Christ was in danger of becoming one of the gods of the Roman Empire.

This comes out in many ways in the daily life of the people. Hindus will have no hesitation in joining in a Christian religious festival. They will take part in the processions, singing the hymns and listening to the prayers. They will often indeed be found to pray most devoutly to Our Lady and the saints, and wherever there is a famous shrine, especially where cures are known to take place, the Hindus will be as numerous as the Christians. The matter is further complicated by the fact that the Christians often tend to adopt Hindu customs and ways of doing things. I once joined in a Catholic procession at a church in Bangalore, where the statues of the saints were carried in procession, and I could not help seeing that it was almost exactly like a Hindu procession, where the statues of the saints had taken the place of the "idols" of the gods. Yet I think that it is generally recognized that the Christian processions are more reverent and prayerful than the Hindu and less like a holiday in the modern sense.

IN KERALA the relations between the Christians and the Hindus are extraordinarily interesting. Here the Christian faith has been in existence for at least fifteen hundred years, and there are towns and villages

Dom Bede Griffiths, O.S.B., author of *The Golden String* and a frequent contributor, is now in Kerala, India.

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where the Catholics number ninety or even ninety-eight per cent. It is almost like living in Italy or Ireland. But this extraordinarily solid strength of the Church has been built up over the centuries because the Christians formed themselves into what is practically a separate caste. (Even today when a schoolboy fills in an entrance form for a school he puts down "Caste—Christian.") In the early days this was probably the only way in which the Christians could preserve their identity and not be submerged in the sea of surrounding Hinduism. But it meant that the Christians observed the most rigid rules of caste. There are many Christians living today who remember how in their childhood a person of low caste was not allowed to come within so many yards of the house, and they treated an "untouchable" exactly as the Hindus did. As the Christians themselves formed one of the higher castes, this gave them considerable power and influence. It is necessary to bear all this in mind when one considers the position in Kerala today, where the Communists are exploiting the grievances, both past and present, of the lower castes.

Thus in their social customs the Christians in Kerala have practically identified themselves with the Hindus. The result is that Kerala is one of the few parts of India in which one can say that the Christians really belong and in which the Church appears as something authentically Indian. On the other hand, by keeping themselves a separate caste they have been able to preserve their faith in extraordinary purity. One really feels here, as I have said, that one is living in Italy or Ireland. The faith has the same kind of solid, traditional character. On the other hand it must be admitted that it often has the weaknesses of a traditional faith. There is evidence on all sides that the young people, especially at the universities, are not being given an understanding of their faith on a level with the rest of their education, and as a result many are being attracted to Communism. The Church appears reactionary, especially in the social field, and the Communists are regarded as the only "progressive" and practical people.

Yet it must be admitted that one does catch a glimpse here of what a really Indian Catholicism might be. On the great religious festivals in some of the towns the streets will be hung with colored streamers and huge processions will wind through the streets as the people sing hymns and songs and recite the Rosary all in the native Malayalam. At Christmas every house will have an illuminated Star hung over it, and carol-singers will go around and find a welcome in Hindu no less than in Christian homes.

In the Syro-Malankara rite, to which I now have the privilege of belonging, the Christmas liturgy is of especial interest. It begins at one or two o'clock in the morning with the equivalent of Matins and Lauds, which are sung in the vernacular. (It is characteristic of this rite that on every Sunday before the Kurbana, that is the Mass, the office of Sapro, which is the equivalent of Prime, is sung in the vernacular, all the people taking part in the singing of the psalms which they know by heart.) There is then a ceremony of the fire, rather like the lighting of the holy fire in the Easter Vigil in the Latin rite, which takes place at the porch of the church, all the people going in procession round the fire singing the hymn of the angels. Then follows Sapro (Prime) and finally the Kurbana, the whole service taking about five hours.

It is nothing unusual for a service to take several hours. The ordinary service on Sunday will often take three hours or more. People come to church to spend the morning there and no one is in a hurry to leave. I have often been with the Bishop on a visit to a village church on a Sunday morning. All the people come out to meet him. Bunting is hung out, fireworks explode (an invariable feature of any celebration here), and a procession with gorgeous silk umbrellas of red and green and purple and orange is formed to escort the bishop; songs and hymns are sung in Malayalam and sometimes there is dancing. The people feel that it is their day and their service and they have come there to enjoy it. Sometimes after the service there will even be a meal taken together, a kind of agape, all the people sitting on the ground and eating with their hands.

THERE IS NO doubt that the sense of religion is still extremely strong in India. Millions of people go on pilgrimage every year to the sacred shrines—Hindu, Moslem and Christian—on their great festivals. The temples and churches are thronged with worshippers and they are happy to spend hours in prayer and worship. I shall never forget the visit I paid to a Hindu temple to witness the famous Malabar dance called Kathakali. The ceremonies began at six o'clock in the evening with puja (worship) in the temple and continued throughout the night until six o'clock in the morning. All the precincts of the temple were filled with people from all the surrounding villages who had come to spend the night there.

The dance was the most wonderful thing of its kind I have ever witnessed. It was essentially a sacred dance, representing the stories of the gods and heroes of the Hindu epics and was acted in a strange hieratic way. The actors wore elaborate masks which were painted in a traditional manner and the gestures were strictly formal. There were no words at all but the whole drama, which was often intensely exciting, was enacted by means of most wonderfully subtle and expressive gestures. It was accompanied by a weird music on some very simple instruments (drums and triangle and a pipe).

The effect of all this, the gathering in the open air under the moon, the dark faces crowded together

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watching the spectacle, the lights in the temple shining out and the strange unearthly music of the pipe and drums, was one of extraordinary "sacredness." One felt what it might have been like to have been present at a Greek play in Athens in the time of Aeschylus. There was a sense that the "gods" were present; it was their mysteries which were being enacted and for the time being one was in another world.

It is this sense of the "sacred," the "holy," which gives its strength to religion in India. Everywhere there are sacred places, sacred hills, sacred streams, sacred trees. Indeed there is hardly an outstanding hill or river or tree which has not got its shrine. A peasant working in a field will often build a little shrine in clay and offer his worship there, and on every bus, at least in the country, there will be a little picture of one of the gods or goddesses with flowers placed before it. In Kerala, there will often be a picture of the Sacred Heart or of Our Lady instead, and everywhere along the road one finds crosses and shrines erected. Thus religion still underlies the whole life of the people, and Hinduism and Christianity are strangely interwoven in the fabric of Indian life.

YET IT MUST be admitted that religion, and especially Hinduism, is going through a critical period now. The young people, especially in the cities, tend to throw off religion entirely. Few of the students at the universities go to the temple now, and Christian students tend to be affected in the same way. But it is here that the strength of Christianity may begin to show itself. It is the weakness of Hindusim that with all its depth of religious feeling and philosophical insight it is inextricably bound up with mythology. Indeed it would be true, I think, to say that Hinduism is based on mythology. The gods are symbols of the divine mystery, many of them profoundly significant, but they have no reality in themselves. Even Rama and Krishna, upon whom, above all, Hindu devotion rests, are not properly historical figures. They are epic heroes who have become deified by the religious imagination of India. However beautiful and significant these figures may be, it is inevitable that, as modern education spreads, their reality is more and more questioned. The university student is beginning to lose his faith in them.

But one must not exaggerate. I knew a group of university students at Bangalore, one a very close friend, and I was astonished at the deep roots which this ancient mythology had in their minds. The roots are in their blood and in their ancestry; they are continually fostered at home by the custom of prayer and the influence of the family, especially the women, and by regular visits to the temple. And these roots seem often strong enough to withstand a modern education. My friend was a good example of this. He was studying for a degree in Commerce and was extremely modern and Western in most of his ideas. During the week he dressed in shirt and trousers like any young student at a university. But on Saturday, if I went to the little temple of the god Hanuman, which is quite close to our monastery, I would find him officiating in the temple, dressed in nothing but a "dhoti," that is a plain piece of cloth wound round the middle, and with his Brahmin cord across his breast. He might have been an Egyptian priest officiating in a temple in the year 3000 B.C.

In India one continually encounters this paradox of a primeval religion and culture surviving in the same person beside the most up-to-date ideas and customs. Yet there is no doubt that this has set up a conflict in the mind of the Indian today, a conflict which may become critical within the next generation. With all its depth of religious instinct, its sense of the sacred, its fervor of devotion, its ascetic and mystical tradition and its philosophy, which reaches the highest level ever attained by human thought, Hinduism remains bound up with a vast system of mythology which a modern mind must find impossible to accept. It is here, surely, that we must look for the true place of Christ in India.

As long as He is regarded as a symbolic figure like Rama and Krishna, Christ can never have a true birth in the Indian soul. But when it comes to be realized that He is in reality a historical figure, that He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried, that His is the point at which God enters history, not as a symbol but as a Person to change the course of history and to transform it, then the decisive point in the history of India may also be reached. For Christ alone is capable of reconciling the ancient tradition of religion in India with the demands of the modern mind. He is the fulfillment of all that the imagination of the Indian soul has sought to find in its gods and heroes, in its temples and sacrifices. But He is also a human being, Who enters into history, Who remains in His Church as a living power capable of transforming its economic and political and social life. His story is, if one may say so, the myth become true. The Resurrection of Christ is at once a historical fact, which has changed the course of history, and also a symbol of that divine wisdom in which human life and history can alone find their true meaning.

When the Hindu mind comes to recognize the mystery of Easter, the fact of the Resurrection, which sets Christ apart from all avatars, when it acknowledges the uniqueness of the Incarnation, then only will Christmas find its proper place in the life of India. Then one may hope also that all the genius of India, its depth of religious insight, which has never been equaled in history, may find its true center in Christ and build up in India a Church which will surpass all others in the depth of its understanding of the riches of Christ.

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Isaac Hecker's stress on personal freedom shocked European traditionalists

The Paulist Apostolate

by JOHN B. SHEERIN

THE PAULIST FATHERS held their Centenary Dinner on October 27th at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City. In the same city a century ago four young American converts began their corporate existence as a religious society. Native Protestants and the vast body of immigrant Catholics looked with a cold eye on this strange flower that had brashly taken root in American soil, but today its innovations are no longer considered revolutionary. Its methods, and to a large degree its spirit, are integral to American Catholic life.

Isaac Hecker was the guiding star of this young society. With him were Augustine Hewit, former Episcopal deacon; George Deshon, roommate of Ulysses Grant at West Point; and Francis Baker, former rector of an Episcopal church in Baltimore. Born in Hester Street, New York, in 1819, young Hecker early drifted from his Methodist belief into social reform. As Canon Barry wrote of him: "He was one of the farsighted young workmen who resisted at its beginning that iniquitous tyranny which has since enthroned its Vanderbilts and Jay Goulds in Wall Street. . . ." Isaac was indeed a workman, but he was at the same time an employer, who with his brothers laid the foundations of the Hecker Flour Company. (In his *The Yankee Paul* [Bruce], Rev. Vincent Holden, C.S.P. tells the exciting story of Hecker's first thirty-eight years.)

In the course of his social reform expeditions, young Hecker met Orestes Brownson, the Unitarian minister who had renounced traditional Christianity for Social Democracy. Brownson exerted a profound influence on Hecker: his razor-sharp logic and almost bullish sincerity fascinated the young mystic. At Brownson's suggestion, Hecker went to Brook Farm at West Roxbury, Massachusetts, to see if paradise-hunters like Emerson, Ripley and Dana could help him find the answer to the burning question of his purpose in life. "Ernest the Seeker," as the Brook Farmers called him, enjoyed his time at the Farm but failed to find his answer. So he went on to Fruitlands, that Utopia over which the incredible Bronson Alcott presided. Isaac's verdict was terse: "Too little fruit, too much literature." To make a long odyssey short, he studied Catholicism, was received into the Catholic Church at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York in August 1844, and left a year later for St. Trond, Belgium, to take up his training for the priesthood. Ordained a Redemptorist, he returned to America and preached Catholic missions.

He and his missionary confreres requested the establishment of an English-speaking house, but the Redemptorists at that time were concentrating on their apostolate to the Germans in the United States. Hecker went to Rome to present the case for an English-speaking house, arriving in 1857, and was dismissed from the Redemptorists for having come without permission. He appealed the case, waited seven months in Rome, and finally had a hearing before Pope Pius IX. The result was that the Pope suggested the American converts start a new religious society and dispensed them from their vows as Redemptorists.

THUS PROVIDENCE wrote straight with crooked lines. During his seminary days Hecker had been quietly contemplating a particular apostolate to his fellow-Yankees, and out of his anguish in Rome the dream took form. He returned to the United States, and on July 7, 1858, the Archbishop of New York approved the Programme of Rule drawn up by the four convert-priests. Their target was the conversion of America.

The new community had a spirit that distinguished it from all others. Hecker was convinced that a religious society aiming to evangelize America would have to be American right down to the core of its personality, a core which is the love of liberty. He once said that a Paulist should prefer "to suffer from the excesses of liberty rather than from the arbitrary actions of tyranny." This heavy stress on personal freedom shocked the sturdy European traditionalists who tended to think of America as a nest of anarchists, wild-eyed revolutionaries and a vast brood of radicals who had been expelled from Europe. Yet Hecker's zeal was so disarming that he won over to his side some of the most intractable of the conservatives.

In his spiritual doctrine, which was simply the

Father Sheerin, himself a Paulist, is the editor of the *Catholic World*, the magazine founded by Father Hecker.

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ancient orthodoxy adapted to meet the American situation, Hecker showed that intransigent loyalty to the Church and unquestioning assent to the *magisterium* did not demand a transplantation of the stern discipline of old-world religious orders to American Catholic religious life. He asserted that the freedom-loving Paulist would make a much more effective apostle here than would a priest schooled in the old tradition of religio-military discipline.

"So far as is compatible with faith and piety," wrote Hecker, "I am for accepting the American civilization with its usages and customs." He was not content with emphasizing the essential freedom of a believer; he went on to insist that the principles of democracy are truly Catholic. He lauded the American system of Church-State separation which forbids the state to meddle in religious affairs and yet presumes that American institutions require the support of religion. "He makes a gross mistake who imagines the future greatness of America lies in a divorce between religion and the state. All free institutions stand in need of the support of religion and the love of country needs for its life the love of God." This reads almost like an echo of the Supreme Court's decision in the Zorach "released-time" case: "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being."

Hecker's program of life for the Paulists, placing such a strong emphasis on personal freedom, produced in the community a sense of personal initiative that flowered in an exuberance of new apostolic devices, techniques and projects. Just as he wanted his Paulists to carry on a continuing dialogue with the American mind so that they would have a sympathetic understanding of that mind, so too he wanted them to employ the latest methods in communicating their message.

As the spade was the evangelist's tool in the Benedictine centuries, so the press was to be the Paulist's tool. One of Hecker's first moves was to found the *Catholic World* magazine, and when it appeared, in 1865, secular critics of the standing of William Cullen Bryant could say of it: "In point of literary merit and typography it is quite equal to our best secular magazines." And shortly after starting *The Catholic World,* Hecker designed a gigantic project, The Catholic Publication Society, for the distribution of Catholic literature to non-Catholics. He persuaded the Bishops at the Council of Baltimore (1866) of the feasibility of his plan and they promised to finance it by means of collections to be taken up annually in the principal churches of the country. Unfortunately for the project, great waves of immigration came from Europe to our shores shortly after the Council and the Bishops found that they had to divert all available funds to building churches and schools for the new arrivals. Yet the plan did not altogether die: it lived on in the Columbus Press, now the Paulist Press, which publishes millions of pamphlets yearly and operates a national distributing service for publishers.

Undismayed by the fate of his *Publication Society,* Hecker then turned his attention to the possibility of a Catholic daily newspaper. The New York *World* was on the market at the time and he set about collecting the $300,000 needed to purchase it. When he had collected $150,000, however, his health broke down and the enterprise folded.

WHAT HAVE the Paulists accomplished? I believe it was Professor Gabriel of Yale who said that Hecker did not succeed in Catholicizing America but did succeed in Americanizing Catholicism. This sounds as though the early Paulists were subverters. It is true that Hecker and his associates profoundly influenced American Catholic life: so much so that Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishops Ireland, John Keane, Martin Spalding, and Bishop John Lancaster Spalding all liked to call themselves "Paulists." The Paulist impact was felt in non-Catholic circles also. Protestant bigotry mellowed to a considerable degree and respect for Catholicism reached a new peak by the end of the century. Conversions were numerous, though the number was far from astronomical, and the soil of America seemed ready for the sowing.

Then came the turn of the century. Father Walter Ong, S.J., in his *Frontiers in American Catholicism,* remarked that Hecker and his associates attempted to initiate a dialogue between the Church and America, but *Testem Benevolentiae,* with its shafts at "Americanism," killed off this dialogue and the American Catholic received a blow to his self-confidence from which he has never recovered. In this 1899 encyclical Pope Leo XIII condemned certain radical changes in Catholic teaching said to be advocated by some American Catholics in order to make Catholicism more attractive to non-Catholics. In his reply Cardinal Gibbons assured the Pope that this false Americanism had no existence in America. The "Americanism" episode did leave a deep wound in the Paulist soul, but it didn't prevent Fathers Walter Elliott and Alexander Doyle

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from organizing in 1902 the Catholic Missionary Union and establishing at Washington the Apostolic Mission House, a daring venture to train diocesan priests in giving non-Catholic missions in the Hecker fashion.

I believe it was the Modernism affair, rather than "Americanism," that caused Paulists to slow their pace and to fall back on defensive apologetics or to devote themselves to other activities. Modernism, condemned by Pope Pius X in 1907, was a group of heresies which professed to save the Church by altering Catholic dogmas to conform to contemporary thought, and the condemnation created a climate of excessive caution in the American apostolate. During the next thirty years after 1907 there were outstanding Paulists in journalism, literature, preaching and conservative apologetics; there were new projects like Radio Station WLWL; the N.C.W.C. originated in the heart and mind of Paulist Father John J. Burke and he was its Executive Secretary till his death. But it seems to me the old Hecker mystique of enthusiastic rapprochement with the American mind was missing.

Within the last fifteen years, however, we have been gathering up again the golden thread. The Community has witnessed a resurgence of the old Hecker spirit, due chiefly to the missiology courses of Father John T. McGinn in our seminary. The renewal is evident in new mission devices such as the Sunday Mass Mission and in new emphasis on old devices like the pulpit-dialogue, in Information Centers, in Newman Clubs where Paulists come in close contact with the university mind, in a new stress on liturgy and church music in apostolic parishes, in a National Conference of convert work experts held in Washington last October.

This return to the spirit of Hecker envisions a large and responsible role for the laity in Paulist work in the future. In a letter to Archbishop Spalding previous to the 1866 Baltimore Council, Hecker suggested that a great Congress of the Laity be convened at about the time of the Council or soon after. He judged it "deplorable" that the Church in America called for so little exertion on the part of the laity: "Men must *do* something and feel a responsibility if they are to appreciate their religion. The blood must circulate through the limbs, otherwise we shall die of apoplexy and the laity of paralysis."

As I see it, our best hope for the ultimate conversion of America is this vast reservoir of lay energy, a reservoir that we have only begun to tap.

THE SHRINE AT GUADALUPE

Pilgrimage to Mexico

by DOROTHY DAY

I SPENT six months in Mexico back in 1929, most of the time in Mexico City and Xochimilco. The churches had just been reopened and there was only one priest in all the capital who heard confessions in English. His understanding of the language was so bad he shouted to make you understand *him,* and the other penitents kept tactfully the church-length away during the long afternoon's wait to be heard. The political situation was bad, but when isn't it? It was a time of fiesta days, and every time the fireworks exploded we thought another revolution was starting.

Diego Rivera was among the many Mexicans I met then. He was large and genial and had just come back from Russia, where, he told me, I had rubles waiting for me for the many translations into all the languages of the U.S.S.R. of my article "Having a Baby," which had originally appeared in *The Masses.* It was a happy article and I was glad to hear that it had been translated. The baby, then going on four years old, was with me there. She had been baptized four months after birth and I had been baptized eighteen months later.

I remember Rivera well, and I remember that I had been up against enough anti-Catholic and anti-religious propaganda among some of the artists and writers of *The Masses* not to be shocked at his attitude toward religion. I probably even agreed with much of Rivera's criticism, especially in regard to the wealth of the Church and the luxury of the clergy. But my Catholicism was an act of faith. "Though He may slay me, yet will I trust in Him." It had seemed like death, at the time, to become a Catholic.

The serious articles which I wrote while in Mexico, about the political situation, were all rejected by the Catholic magazines to which I submitted them. So I remembered the journalistic training I had received

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Dorothy Day, of the Catholic Worker, is the author of *From Union Square to Rome* and *The Long Loneliness.*

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under Lionel Moise, the famed city editor who also taught journalism to Ernest Hemingway, and I began writing features about Tamar and myself. It was the beginning of Tamar's life in print and she has had to be content to be a part of my writing ever since. (Once when there was a long gap in my mention of her in articles a reader wrote to ask if she were dead!) I wrote about our visit to Our Lady of Guadalupe's shrine, about Easter in Xochimilco, about living with a Mexican family, about Adolpho Fuentes of the revolutionary party who took us on picnics in his truck on Sundays, about living with the people (Communists would call them the peasants) who farmed the man-made islands of Xochimilco.

I was there six months at that time and only returned to New York because Tamar became ill. And now I have spent another two weeks on a pilgrimage there. I presume to write about Mexico on the basis of just this much experience, but then Evelyn Waugh wrote an entire book about Mexico after only a two months' visit. He did not apologize, saying that it is the function of the journalist to "hope to notice things which the better experienced accept as commonplace and to convey to a distant public some idea of the aspect and feel of a place."

THE TWO articles I wrote in the *Catholic Worker* about this pilgrimage called forth some sharp rebukes from critics of the Church who blame all the poverty and illiteracy of Mexico on the clergy. Who is their scapegoat for the poverty I have seen in America, that of the sharecroppers and the tenant farmers, the migrant workers, the Negroes and Puerto Ricans in our city slums? And why has not the revolution done more for the poor in Mexico in the hundred years since the reform laws were passed? But I do not want to enter into controversy. I will get on with my impressions, because that is all this article will be.

"But did you enjoy yourself?" Fritz Eichenberg asked me, after he had read my two articles in the *Catholic Worker,* and since they were apparently not personal enough for him, I shall make this very personal.

Yes, it was a happy trip. I enjoyed Father Neudecker's talk on the train between Kansas City and San Antonio and Laredo (and that part of the trip was most comfortable). I enjoyed the cartons of good whole wheat bread which he had baked himself at Kellogg, Minnesota, where he "earns his living" by grinding wheat and selling good flour as St. Paul earned his by sailmaking. I enjoyed his sitting up with us all night on the trip from the border to San Luis Potosi (accent on the last syllable), when it was freezing cold and the doors of the car would not stay closed. The old missionary with us took a berth, thank God, and the other priest, who should have, caught a very bad cold, but maybe it was Father Neudecker's whole wheat bread which saved him. The toilets overflowed, the car became filthy, but still it was not as bad as the front cars, which were of wood, with wooden seats and open windows.

Yes, I enjoyed that cold night—it was part of a pilgrimage. I enjoyed it as St. Francis did the ashes on his bread. Coming into San Luis Potosi four hours late, we received Communion at one of the three Masses offered, and then had our first solid meal at a little hotel. (Of course we had had plenty of Father Neudecker's bread.) Then our three guides drove us in their three cars over the most beautiful mountains and plains to Guanajuante, a town so entrancing that I should choose to stay there rather than at Taxco or Cuernavaca or any other tourist place. We put up for two nights at the Sante Fe hotel on the plaza. At night a band played and the boys and girls walked around and around, the boys going in one direction and the girls in another so that they were constantly repassing one another. When the band stopped, other musicians with stringed instruments and very solemn faces played Mexican music and sang mournfully.

THE NEXT morning after an early Mass we set out for the Mountain of Christ the King, on the top of which is a great shrine, a tremendous statue like that of our Statue of Liberty, which was erected on this highest mountain of central Mexico to replace one which had been bombed by a lone Communist aviator back in 1928 or before. Perpetual adoration is offered at a shrine of the Benedictine nuns of Christ the King in a convent a little way down the mountain, which is seven thousand feet high. You can imagine the view of the world around us in that crystal clear air, high, high above the surrounding hills and plains.

One of the things about this old civilization is that no matter how far you go in the wilderness there are always signs of human habitation. There are no fences, but there are always shepherds and herdsmen, on foot, living with their animals, father and son, sitting with neighbor father and son. Oxen do the ploughing, harvesting is by hand, threshing is as it was in Biblical times. The land is old, and the ways of the people are ancient, too. They are lean and spare and pruned to the bone.

The next day we started promptly at nine o'clock in the morning and drove in our three cars to San Miguel d'Allende, named not only for St. Michael but also for d'Allende, a national hero who (as one of the guides told us) pushed Father Hidalgo into revolution when he hesitated. We had an elaborate lunch there, in a hotel which was formerly a Franciscan monastery and is now the most luxurious building the town offers for travelers' accommodations, and visited the art school, which is also a former monastery. It is not only that

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the Orders were robbed of their possessions and of the fruit of their hard work; there is evidence too of a decline in vocations and the ability to build such foundations again.

We drove another hundred miles to Tolucca, and then on for forty-five miles to Mexico City. The city was a dazzling sight, a sea of jewels, as we came down the mountains into the old lake bed where the city is situated. Our hotel was spacious, with hot baths and high ceilings, but it was on a mean, narrow street. There was no restaurant in the hotel nor any near at hand, and the other pilgrims wanted to move, which we did the next day, although it was Sunday.

It is strange about pilgrimages. The high point should have been that Sunday morning, when we went out to the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, three miles away from the center of the city. Street cars and buses, cabs, taxis, every kind of conveyance was directed toward that little hill of Tepayac, where the Blessed Mother, in the guise of a young Indian maiden of fifteen, appeared to Juan Diego (the Spanish name for the Indian) and told him that she would be the protectress of the Indians, that she loved them. Everyone knows the story, how she filled his tilma, a sort of burlap blanket he wore over his shoulders, with Castilian roses, which did not grow in that part of the country or at that time of year at all. He brought his roses to the Bishop, who, with those around him, at once fell on his knees in veneration. For there on the tilma was painted a miraculous picture of the Indian Aztec Virgin, Our Lady of Guadalupe. This all happened in 1531, and the best telling of it, from the original documents, is to be found in *The Dark Virgin* by Donald Demarest.

But the moment of exaltation does not come according to a timetable. We were on pilgrimage, and we had guides who had scheduled our tour—one day we were to be here, another there. Very often, of course, we did slip away from each other and kneel in those magnificent churches and basilicas among the people of Mexico City and among the poor, barefoot, white-clad, silent and devout, who kneel for hours, their arms outstretched, their eyes on the face of the Virgin or our Crucified Lord. It was all so different from everything we knew, that we had been accustomed to. We were distracted constantly by the crowds, and by the individuals who absorbed our attention. And there was the climate, the rarefied air at that tremendous altitude, twelve thousand feet.

A PILGRIMAGE like this is the time to be carried along with the others, to keep a diary, or to write letters home that will be saved for you to refresh your memory with. Later on, it is often a sudden smell of charcoal or beeswax, or the feel of cold stone under your knees, or the sight of another at worship that recalls you.

I visited the shrine again before we left, but I am always terribly distracted by people. No matter how long I stay, no matter how resolutely I try to close my eyes, ears and thought, my worship remains an act of will, a gesture of the body. I am present, but I am not carried away. Certainly I am more often overtaken by joy and thanksgiving in my own parish church at home. No matter how much of a pilgrim I consider myself, and call myself, I am wedded to home, to the House of Hospitality, to the parish where we live in New York. It is my vocation.

On our last day we had an audience with Archbishop Miranda, and he kept us for two hours, talking to us about the Church in Mexico. We felt blessed indeed. The laws against the Church are still on the books, as they are in France, he pointed out. It is not only in Russia that the Church is being persecuted. The great need, he said, is for vocations, and for lay apostles to help the priests. This great archbishop is also a believer in non-violent resistance to oppression. During the worst of the persecution there was not a bishop in Mexico who advocated armed resistance. Always the emphasis was on the spiritual weapons, on prayer and suffering. There were many martyrs.

Sunday, after Mass, I left on the noon bus, the Chuihuahua line, for El Paso, the ticket costing eleven dollars and fifty cents. The other pilgrims were returning by train or plane. The roads were good, the seats conducive to relaxed comfort, we were warm though there was a severe cold spell through central Mexico, and I was overjoyed to hear one of my fellow passengers reading aloud, from a copy of the *Catholic Worker* which I had given her. She was reading some of Peter Maurin's *Easy Essays* to the only other English-speaking passenger in the crowded bus. Not at all distracted by the hub-hub around her, she read and laughed aloud, and constantly said, "But this is remarkable!"

Peter Maurin, Catholic Worker founder, had reached a few more people, and I was on my way home, back to work with the new strength one always gains from a pilgrimage.

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SEASON'S GREETINGS

(With apologies to Frank Sullivan and the New Yorker)

ON CHRISTMAS DAY, the good Lord willin'
We'll drink a toast to Edward Skillin
To Richard Horchler's kith and kin
And all connected with Jim Finn
We'll think of very special ways
To honor Mr. Richard Hayes
We'll show we really give a care-a
For busy, busy James O'Gara
And sweeten every last tart tongue
With honied words for Phil Hartung
There won't be even one boo-maker
When cheers are called for John Brubaker
We won't forget a single name
Nor denigrate a single claim

Merry Christmas, Graham Greene
Mr. Blanshard, Bishop Sheen
Reinhold Niebuhr, H.A.R.
Correspondents, near and far
You who think we're sometimes right,
Like Thurston Davis and Bishop Wright,
Merry Christmas, friends, to you
We often like the things you do;
You who think we're sometimes wrong,
Like John Lukacs and Father Ong,
We know exactly what you mean
Come sit beside Kuehnelt-Leddihn
Father Ginder, be a sport
Tip your glass to John C. Cort
All ye critics, plain and fancy
Here's your chance to honor Clancy
Sound your A's for William Pfaff
Phil Scharper and his better half
Greet Notre Dame's great Frank O'Malley
And Boston's friendly Father Lally
Maryknollers, *peres et soeurs,*
And Catholic Workers, who share and share,
The usual wings, left and right,
And Organization Men (see Whyte)
All goes well and luckily
We all love young Bill Buckley
Michael Harrington, here's to you
And Farrar-Straus' Bob Giroux
And let there be no Iron Curtain
Twixt us and Reverend Thomas Merton
Let every man who's learned to read
Acknowledge debt to Frank J. Sheed
Then lift an honor-dripping sword
For Sheed's fair lady Maisie Ward
Anne Fremantle, so prolific
Here's a secret: you're terrific
M. Barrat in gay Paree
Joyeux Noel, mais oui, mais oui
And finally we'll all come clean
We think the world of our Kumlien
And who this side of St. John Gogarty
Can we possibly match with Michael Fogarty?

Those who have the sorry fate
To write on themes of Church and State
Need scarcely bear a single worry
While they can crib from Father Murray
So hail to him, Père Weigel, too
We'll even cheer P.O.A.U.
Perhaps in 1959
They'll try a wholly different line
Ave, Jean and Walter Kerr
Don MacDonald, Daniel Herr
Aelred Graham, Portsmouth prior,
And every last Franciscan friar
Jean Holzhauer, *car' amiga*
We all agree you are big league-a
And wouldn't we be up a tree
Without B. Murchland, C.S.C.?
We should decree a holiday
For our Claire Bishop (born Huchet)
Wave the flag for Father Ford,
The Maritains and Leo Ward
Eugene McCarthy, U.S. Sen.,
Gardiner, Harold and Masse, Ben
To Molnar, Tom and Paulding, Govvy
Merry Christmas, all our love-ee
Our words will be as soft as fur
In praise for Higgins, *Monseigneur*
And wouldn't we feel quite, quite sinly,
Not to remember Phyllis McGinley?

To forgotten friends, like Myrt and Marge,
And remembered ones, like John LaFarge
Contented readers like Sister K
And Alice S and Brother J
Alas we can't forget the few
Who think we tend to overdo
The Father Pauls and Father Rocks
Who aren't quite sure we're orthodox
A very liberal chap named Guff
Who thinks we don't go far enough
Buona festa, joy and mirth
You all deserve some peace on earth.

JOHN COGLEY.

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THE SCREEN

LA JOIE DE VIVRE DE MA TANTE

I HAVE BEEN in love with Rosalind Russell for so long it isn't funny, so anything I have to say about her new movie is more than a little prejudiced. I suspect, however, that even if I were not a Russell fan, I'd laugh at the hilarious antics in "Auntie Mame," which is about a very unconventional New Yorker who in 1928 suddenly finds herself the guardian of her ten-year-old nephew. She is determined, although it may cramp her style a bit, to do right by the little boy, but it doesn't cramp Mame much. For her education has an all-inclusive note: "I'm going to open doors for you. Doors you never dreamed existed." And the nephew takes everything in stride, including eccentric Auntie Mame, her screwball friends and all the extra-curricular activities of the uninhibited twenties.

Rosalind Russell is wonderful as Mame, exuding vitality and enjoyment of life, exhibiting impatience for anything petty and mean, showing concern for the oppressed and overwhelming love for her orphaned nephew. It isn't Mame's fault that he grows up to be somewhat of a snob. The boy's official trustee (Fred Clark) yanks him out of the progressive school of Mame's choice and puts him in exclusive Eastern academies and colleges. Mame sees little Patrick only on his vacations; however, after the 1929 crash, scatter-brained Mame tries her inept hand at a series of jobs which she loses in rapid succession, so she's often free—but broke. Then, always hoping to establish a real home for Patrick, she marries a very wealthy Southern gentleman (Forrest Tucker) who, alas, has such a great love for travel that she goes round and round the world. When she returns as a widow making the most of her fashionable weeds, Patrick is grown up and about to marry a hopelessly empty finishing-school product. How Mame saves the young man from this dull girl and her worse parents makes the most amusing and most touching episode of the whole picture.

No conventional movie, "Auntie Mame" consists of a series of episodes with incidents that are sometimes sweet, sometimes naughty and often funny; and Miss Russell sparkles through them all. The lively script, written by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, sticks rather closely to the stage play, which was adapted from Patrick Dennis' novel. This is one of those films that improve on the original play; it still has no great depth or social significance, but it does have more warmth and tenderness than the play, and Director Morton DaCosta keeps things moving at a fast pace—although I wish he had toned down his exuberant star a couple of times and had omitted entirely the unfunny and theatrical Southern episode. The supporting cast is fine, especially Jan Handzlik as the youngster who learns so many of life's secrets, including that of the *dry* Martini, through association with his aunt; Roger Smith as the older Patrick Dennis whom Auntie trims down to size again; Peggy Cass as Mame's secretary; Coral Browne as Mame's hard-drinking actress friend; Joanna Barnes as Patrick's fiancée whom Mame sees through at once. "Auntie Mame" is a handsome picture with beautiful costumes and sets in Technicolor; but what I will remember longest is svelte, joyous Auntie Roz lovingly introducing her nephew to the banquet of life.

EVEN MORE HANDSOME is "Bell, Book and Candle," another movie based on a stage play. Daniel Taradash wrote his good script from John Van Druten's light comedy about modern witches; Producer Julian Blaustein decorated it with luscious Technicolor sets, trappings and gowns and an elaborate cast under the direction of Richard Quine. Kim Novak never looked lovelier than she does as the young New York witch who'd like something different for Christmas, something like James Stewart who lives upstairs. She's disappointed that she has to use witchcraft to win him, and Stewart, who doesn't believe in witches or witchcraft at all, is furious when he discovers how he's been tricked. So he goes to Hermione Gingold, a high priestess in the art of sorcery, who mixes a wicked witch's brew to exorcise him in the film's most hilarious scene.

The plot is pretty thin, but the jokes are many and the attractive cast handle them well. James Stewart is in fine form, and everyone seems to enjoy the fun: Ernie Kovacs as a befuddled author summoned up by Kim; Jack Lemmon as Kim's brother, a warlock who gleefully collaborates with Kovacs in a book on black magic; Elsa Lanchester as Kim's aunt whose childish hexing is indeed vexing. The single theme of "Bell, Book and Candle" may grow a little tiresome for some, but even they will find it good to look at and laugh at.

JERRY LEWIS may not have Rosalind Russell's warmth, but he has added tenderness to his repertoire and he handles it very well in "The Geisha Boy," in which he plays an out-of-work magician who goes to Japan with a U.S.O. troupe. Although Lewis proves rather trying to the Army, he completely charms an unhappy Japanese orphan who wants to adopt Jerry as his father. The picture offers the comedian plenty of opportunity for clowning around, and he is effectively assisted by a rabbit, several pretty girls and by Sessue Hayakawa, who is still building bridges. The best scenes, though, are with little Robert Hirano, whose romps with Jerry are both amusing and touching.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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OF NOTE

ROLE OF THE LAITY

IN A RECENT address to the Iowa Knights of Columbus, the Most Reverend Leo Binz, Archbishop of Dubuque, spoke on the "Role of the Laity in the Church." Substantial excerpts from his address follow:

A modern theologian, writing on the place of the laity in the Church, has given us the following story: "In an essay . . . published forty years ago . . . Cardinal Aiden Gasquet relates the anecdote of an inquirer who asked a priest what was the position of the layman in the Catholic Church. 'The layman has two positions,' answered the priest. 'He kneels before the altar; that is one. And he sits below the pulpit; that is the other.' The Cardinal adds that there is a third that the priest had forgotten: the layman also puts his hand in his purse."

The writer goes on to observe that what the priest said was, is, and always will be true. Men and women of the faithful laity will always please God, crowd our churches to kneel before the altar of God. Yet, as the writer points out, "Now and for the future they do these things in a different way; or, at least, doing these things they feel differently about their position as a body in the Church."

In other words . . . there is a reawakening in the Church today to the fundamental fact, ancient as Christianity itself, that the laity is truly the "holy people," the consecrated people spoken of in the Canon of the Mass, with special responsibilities corresponding to their state. . . .

To put it very simply, "lay people are Christians in the world." They are "there to do God's work insofar as it must be done in and through the work of the world." While this is a simple statement, it needs much thought, elaboration and careful application. Too often the fact that lay people are Christians in the world has been taken to mean that the laity should do all in its power to introduce into their lives what monks do in the cloister. This is false. Or it may be taken to mean that, in addition to doing what monks do in the cloister, Christian lay people also have to do the work of the world, which the monk doesn't have to do. This, too, is false. Even worse, and just as false, is the notion that the laity is the passive or non-active element in the Church, the silent spectators, the quiet onlookers.

Pope Pius XII attacked directly this false notion. He clearly stated: "It would be minimizing the real nature of the Church and her social character to distinguish in her a purely active element, the ecclesiastical authorities, and on the other hand, a purely passive element, the laymen. All the members of the Church . . . are called upon to collaborate in the building and the perfecting of the Mystical Body of Christ. They are all free persons and must, therefore, be active."

In other words, in order to carry out her saving mission to mankind the Church has to have laity, the faithful people who do the work of the world and reach their last end in dedication to that work. Likewise, she needs members who are directly and exclusively dedicated to the work of God's kingdom, and who are, therefore, dispensed from the world's work: the clergy and religious. But the whole, the total mission of the Church of God is, in the words of St. Pius X, "to restore all things in Christ" . . .

Of course, it is quite possible, as history shows, for many misunderstandings to arise about the relative positions of clergy and laity in the Church. Misunderstandings may arise, for example, among the members of the hierarchy and the clergy. In this connection, I quote the words of a French Bishop, uttered in 1907, which are applicable to the problem we face today in re-thinking the position of the laity. "It is very possible that in the past we Bishops did not understand your role sufficiently and completely enough. We used to appeal to your purse for material needs, to your devotedness, to your knowledge for the management of our property, to your devotion for the carrying of a candle in a eucharistic procession. If that was nearly all, it was not, or at any rate, it is not enough . . . over centuries, apostleship was looked upon as a 'reserved occupation' . . . (now) everywhere there is discussion of the delicate question of coordinating the two apostleships, ours, hierarchical, and yours, lay."

Misunderstandings may also arise on the part of the laity. History makes mention of laicism, of trusteeism, and of other condemned viewpoints. There are unhappy examples in any age of people who exclude the clergy from their proper ministrations; and there is all too prevalent today an exclusion of spiritual influence in social and political morality. . . .

Nevertheless, we must all face up to the problem of rediscovering and developing the responsible activity of the laity in the Church today. This calls for an effort on the part of the clergy. It demands likewise from the laity an even greater outpouring of zealous activity. The misunderstandings which may arise are no excuse for avoiding the task. As Pope Pius XII rather bluntly said: "The tasks of the Church are too immense today to leave room for petty disputes. In order to preserve the sphere of action of each, it is sufficient that all should possess enough spirit of faith, disinterestedness and mutual esteem and confidence. Respect for the dignity of the priest has always been one of the most typical characteristics of the Christian community. On the other hand, the layman also has rights, and the priest for his part must recognize them. It is true more

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than ever today that (the laity) must lend collaboration with greater fervor 'for building up the body of Christ' (Eph. 4:12) in all forms of the apostolate, especially when it is a matter of making the Christian spirit penetrate all family, social, economic and political life."

For all too many people, as a layman has observed, "the lay apostolate remains an interesting but rarefied term—something like the liturgy, intriguing but unrelated to workaday life. "In the minds of many, a lay apostle is still regarded as a kind of frustrated priest, a priest's helper, a hanger-on at the fringes of the clerical ranks." For others, a lay apostle is one who 'compensates' for his work in the world by giving his worldly talents to the service of the Church. For still others, he is someone who is filling in, in doing the work that properly belongs to the clergy, helping to hold the fort until there are enough vocations so that he may be relieved and go back to his more proper, passive way of life. All of these are caricatures of reality; unfortunately, however, they are taken for reality itself by many Catholics.

Now, if none of these notions truly describes the role of the laity in the Church, then just what is its genuine, divinely appointed function? Or, to put it another way, suppose we had enough or even a surplus of priestly and religious vocations, would the help of the laity then become merely superfluous? Certainly not! No, the true role of the laity lies in this fact clearly enunciated by the Holy Father ". . . the relations between the Church and the world require the intervention of lay apostles. The 'consecration of the world' is essentially the work of the laymen themselves. . . ."

In a wide sense the Christian is a sort of incarnation in the world, a clothing with flesh of the divine, a contact point between God and men. Now, if Christian lay people are full-fledged members of both civil society and the Church, it follows that they are the only means by which Christ and Christian principles will be integrated into, or be made a part of the temporal order. They are the means by which the world is consecrated to God, by which all things are restored to Christ. Wherever a Christian goes, there Christ must go. Whenever a Christian speaks or acts, then Christ must speak and act. The laity's tremendous responsibility is to make Christ live in the world again. They and they alone can and must bring Him into family life, recreation, education, labor, business, the professions, economic and political affairs, every human activity.

Now, just how is all this to be worked out in practice? I should deceive you if I were to say that a ready answer is at hand. Yet the Church in America, thank God, has in its short history worked out some of the answers to this problem from its very beginnings. Here we have no strained relations between priests and people, no social abyss to be bridged. This is perhaps why we do not get too excited about theoretical discussions of the problem of collaboration between laity and clergy. . . . But what has been done in the past is not now enough. We have, priests and people together, established parishes and built schools and other institutions, not as an end in themselves, but only as the means for developing the necessary resources of clergy, religious and laity to go forth to the staggering task of winning the world for Christ.

We are not here only to save the saved, to preach the gospel only to one another. That the Church must be mother to her own children no one will deny. That this service to the people of God occupies at present a great deal of our efforts and sacrifices is a readily admitted fact. But if today society is coming apart at the seams; if family life is suffering with divorce and all its evil consequences for the children of broken homes; if juvenile delinquency is a serious worry for responsible public officials; if social and economic life follow the pattern of personal pleasure and crass greed; if the selfish interest of individuals and pressure groups is corrupting political life, then a great deal of work in Christianizing the social order still challenges us. We have no cause to sit back and pat ourselves on the back for a job well done when so much more remains to be accomplished.

An important part of the answer to the winning of men to Christ is to be found as yesterday and a hundred years ago in what is called, in the wide sense of the term, the apostolate of prayer and personal example. . . . But another part of the answer demands our attention also. It is the solution recommended, proposed, exhorted, preached and commanded by all the modern Popes. It is necessary for us to attend to this answer because the apostolates of prayer and good example are simply not sufficient for the cause. Up to the present, we have not paid adequate attention to the papal teaching on the organized apostolate of the laity.

I refer here to what is generally known as Catholic Action. As the Pope explains the term, Catholic Action has a general sense and is applied "to the whole of organized movements of the lay apostolate recognized as such, nationally or internationally, either by the Bishops on the national plane, or by the Holy See for movements aiming at having an international status. . . . Each movement would be designated by its name and characterized by its specific form. . . ."

Beyond such organizations as these, however, there remains the entire social field, the temporal order in which the Church's influence and control reach only as far as the individual layman involved. Here I must mention such groups as labor unions, civic, professional, educational and recreational groups, political parties and every other kind of association. In these areas we must have competent, active and dedicated laymen who work for the good of the group to which they belong and for the common good of the community as well.

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If the world is ever to be restored to Christ, the very institutions of society itself must feel the influence of Christ. We must, indeed, have organized groups promoting works of religion, education, charity: all the official programs of Catholic Action entrusted to them by the Bishops. On the other hand, we must have also the individual Christian worker, Christian business man, Christian professional man, housewife, citizen, student, farmer, living in and transforming a society which needs Christ.

If ordinary people are to perform their religious duties, they must have decent wages, adequate housing, proper medical care, all the things which priests as priests cannot provide for them. This is the area of lay responsibility. It is the field in which the layman, as layman, must bring the influence of Christ. . . .

As the Archbishop of Hartford stated a few years ago: "The lay apostolate is not one in which the people help the priest do the priest's work. On the contrary, in the real lay apostolate the priest helps the layman do the layman's work. Only the layman has competence in the social apostolate. It is only the layman and not the priest who can bring the social teachings of the Church into his union, into the factory, into the political arena. It is only through the layman that these areas can be truly Christianized. . . ."

Poems for Christmas

THE SONG OF A STONE

On this night
When beast sings
What am I
Locked back
In this dark
To that light
Beast is drawn
Fear of fire
Now dispersed
By that star
This child

On this night
Mary's hands
Wrap her child
In human bands
Joseph's rod
Roots and flowers
Where he stands
Creatures stir
Like driving wind
Prophets rise
To honor him

Angels light
The outer lands
From cold sleep
Shepherds draw
With gifts of sheep
To stable floor
Ends of earth
Wooed as kings
Bear him homage
Gold sings laud
Myrrh speaks pain
Frankincense
Proclaims him God

On this night
When earth sings
What am I
Locked back
In this dark—
Ah what is He
Small, so real
Layed in things
In straw, wood
Cloth, in flesh
Who makes me sing!

SALLY APPLETON.

DISSEMBLERS

What!
No fodder! and
all the sheep are set
within the wooden stall near
Joseph standing stiffly tall?
We must have hay and spread it to the wall beneath
the animal and round the clumsy brogues.
Strew it by Mary's rigid arm outstretched
in understatement of concern for tiny limbs
of plastic cast,
into the cardboard crib.
Skip to the hall and draw
from the red ribbon heap, the box with Joneses' scrawl.
Unpack his Burgundy with care and fetch the straw.
Then hang a golden ball to light this instant Bethlehem,
lest when the neighbors call
in this December thaw,
it seem
We do not heed the calendar at all.

SISTER MARY HONORA, O.S.F.

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The Condition of Man in Modern Thought

IRRATIONAL MAN. By William Barrett. Doubleday. $5.

By BERNARD G. MURCHLAND

WHY EXISTENTIALISM, anyway? In this broad, yet remarkable study, Mr. Barrett argues that existentialism is a revolt against a progressive chipping down of life to the merely rational and bears witness to the subconscious furies that, in the end, make us what we are. "Existentialism," he says, "is the counter-Enlightenment come at last to philosophic expression; and it demonstrates beyond anything else that the ideology of the Enlightenment is thin, abstract, and therefore dangerous."

Mr. Barrett begins his study with a survey of man and philosophy today; he then outlines the principal historical forces in light of which our present situation can be understood; in a third step, he studies four philosophers—Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre—whom he considers illustrative end-products of the main intellectual currents of Western tradition; finally, he returns to his point of departure and makes an impassioned plea for the relevance of the existentialist outlook to the mass sterility of technological and bureaucratic society.

"I for one," he proclaims boldly, "am personally convinced that man will not take his next great step forward until he has drained to the lees the bitter cup of his own powerlessness." And again: "Contrary to the rationalist tradition, we now know that it is not his reason that makes man, but rather that reason is a consequence of that which really makes him man. For it is man's existence as a self-transcending self that has forged and formed reason as one of its projects."

As these random quotations clearly indicate, Mr. Barrett is enthusiastically on the side of irrationality. In making his case he reveals much stylistic verve and initiative, a voracious intellectual appetite and a commanding ability to bring to bear upon his central *point d'appui* forceful historical evidence. I believe the principal merit of his study lies precisely in his relational insights between the past and the present. The anguished accents of post-war existentials demand more perspective than the German Occupation or a re-reading of Kierkegaard. Existentialism is not only a contemporary philosophic mood but a major movement (the author well points out) that lies directly in the main stream of modern history. (It might be noted that Mr. Barrett has spread his existential net wide over our century to scoop in some unlikely candidates. In addition to the expected members of the school we find, surprisingly, A. N. Whitehead—because he tended towards "concreteness and adequacy" and described philosophy as the "critique of abstractions." Other figures, who approximate the existentialist ideal in varying degrees: William James, John Dewey and Charles Sanders Pierce.)

The decline of religion, the progressively rational ordering of society, the rise of science and the revolt of modern art are some historical tributaries of existentialism. But we must go back to Hebraism and Hellenism for the root sources of our present intellectual predicament. The Jewish man of faith was an existentialist man. Barrett strengthens his position considerably by pointing out this parallel. The Hebrew was at home amid the surging chaos of the irrational furies. He was characterized by such existential qualities as a desire for transcendence, wholeness, symbolism, concreteness, commitment and a dragging sense of sin. His knowledge was pervasive of his being. Truth for him was a matter of personal truth. Hellenism, on the other hand, injected a counter force into the stream of Western tradition. Following Plato and Aristotle, philosophy had become a purely theoretical and objective discipline—detached, ghostly, and incapable of eliciting universal human response. Even the Christianity of the Middle Ages did not displace this Aristotelian man of reason. Notes Barrett: "It simply made an uneasy alliance between faith as the supernatural center of the personality and reason as the natural center."

This dichotomy revealed itself in various ways within Christian tradition, caught as it was in a rather awkward position between Revelation and the rationalist Greek tradition. One manifestation was the squabble over faith and reason among the Fathers (e.g. Augustine and Tertullian) and later among the Schoolmen. More pertinently, there were the controversies over existence and essence in the Middle Ages — between Aquinas and Scotus, and later Suarez, particularly. The efforts of latter-day Thomists to represent Aquinas as the original and true existentialist, says Barrett, fall short of the mark and have rather the air of pleading a case. (Unamuno is called as a highly vocal witness in this respect.) Mr. Barrett concludes: "The medieval conceptions of essence and existence do not do justice to the full concreteness of modern experience, particularly to our experience of man himself. . . . The solutions of that past can never be totally ours, marvelous as we have come to realize its philosophy as having been." The discussions of this section are among the best in *Irrational Man* and Barrett's points, for the most part, coincide rather accurately with what is, in fact, the Thomist situation today.

Pascal, with his deep awareness of the miserable condition of man, is a much more direct ancestor of today's existentialists. And from him, in Barrett's itinerary, we move on to Swift (hurling vituperation at the Laputan abstractness of his time), the Romantics (both English and Continental, up to and including Gauguin and D. H. Lawrence), Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Picasso,

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Faulkner, Hemingway, Joyce and Beckett.

The sweep of the existentialist pattern in history, as presented by the author, is both generously inclusive and intelligently substantiated. But after we have admired his insights in this respect one or two reservations must be registered in regard to his ability to focus the study critically. In the first place, while Barrett makes something close to a desperate attempt to write from the inside, to write, that is, as a would-be existentialist, the reader cannot altogether take his effort seriously. His plea for some existentialist outlook in American life is just *almost* convincing. Even when he makes a biting remark of some worth upon the precarious hold the intellect has upon American life ("In their actual life Americans are not only a non-intellectual but an anti-intellectual people"), he lacks the intensity he seems to be striving for. One gets the impression that Barrett is more a spectator than a participant in the matters he takes to be so important. He reads the labels well. But in the end he seems more like a viewer who is not really caught up in what is happening on the stage; who knows that, however bloody the tragedy before him, he will be able to leave the theater peacefully, catch his bus, and on his way to have a drink, successfully brush off whatever emotions the play may have aroused in him. I take this to be a certain lack of depth. But it raises this very real problem: just how can the American mind be affected by serious thought?

A more serious objection is Barrett's failure to establish the criteria of existentialist thinking. He enthusiastically endorses that thinking but it must be safeguarded by more than subjective feeling, however intense. Mr. Barrett reduces the whole phenomenon of existentialism to an opposition of subject vs. object, the partiality of the analytic approach vs. the wholeness of the existentialist approach, and does not guarantee the superiority of one over the other or indicate how feeling is to be grounded in an acceptable core of values. By not transcending the traditional dichotomy, but only switching his allegiance to the other side, he has unnecessarily weakened his book. His choice of subjects for analysis is, I think, largely responsible for this failure. Had the author completed his profile studies of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre with some consideration of those thinkers who have to some extent dominated the classicist, divisive pitfalls he would have been much more convincing. I am thinking of such men as Bergson, Lavelle and Marcel who, it seems, have added a spiritual shade to the existentialist coat of many colors and established some metaphysical ground beyond either subjectivism or objectivism.

The Irish Psyche

THE PROSPECTS ARE PLEASING. By Honor Tracy. Random House. $3.50.

By ANNE FREMANTLE

MUCH deep-sea diving has been done into the individual psyche, but very little commensurate plumbing of national subconsciousnesses has been attempted: a few sanguinary guesses by the Comte de Gobineau; a few Christian conundrums posed by Emmanuel Mounier, and that's it. Yet there is so much to discover. Why, for example, are certain races regarded as humorous by all others? Mention the Irish, and on every face, instantly, is a huge dumb grin. Jewish wit, too, though vastly different, is universally acclaimed. And the Irish and the Jews themselves accept their own mirthmaker attributes, and glory in them. On the other hand who can visualize an all time record breaking long-running Broadway success called *The Ibsens and the Kierkegaards?* yet *The Cohens and the Kelly's* and *Abie's Irish Rose* were distinctly good box-office. Why should a combination of Norwegian and Danish be so unfunny?

These queries—among others—are raised by Miss Honor Tracy's second successful exploitation of Irish humorousness (rather than of Irish humor). It is, perhaps, not quite as hilarious as *The Straight and Narrow Path,* but it is a great deal funnier than most novels, first second or third. Miss Tracy's hero, Tommy O'Driscoll, is of course, an arrant coward, and no hero; the real McCoy—who steals the show—is a delightful English eccentric, Felix Horniman. Felix meets Tommy when the latter is leaning against the stone balustrade outside the Morgan Gallery in London "his head buried in his arms and his whole attitude indicative of final, hopeless, despair. He was groaning a little." Tommy had answered an ad in a Dublin evening paper indicating that he who did so might discover how justice for Ireland might be obtained. He and a colleague, Liam MacLamh were then immediately sent off, with ten pounds sterling in their pockets, by a mysterious Bombardier, to steal from the Morgan Gallery any one of three canvases of his "Goat" period, bequeathed to it by Afrodisio Lafuente y Chaos, "in memory of happy days spent at Yarmouth, Ramsgate and Ballybunion." Shades of Sir Hugh Lane!

Tommy's despair stems from Liam MacLamh's non-appearance. Felix gallantly offers himself in Liam's place, and pops into the Morgan to steal the picture—only to come out with a Toulouse Lautrec he took because it was such a much better picture. Tommy will have none of it. Ireland isn't interested in art, pronounces Tommy; it must be one of the legacy pictures. So Felix trots back and steals the Lafuente—the Gallery was quite empty, as the director had been warned by an anonymous postcard that there would be a raid and had all the staff lined up while he lectured them on security.

Felix gets a friend to fly him and the picture to Dublin, for Tommy has fled. They meet again, at the home of Tommy's landlord, a Mrs. Barry, of the ascendancy. She of course falls for Felix. The picture is duly delivered to the Irish Prado, and Tommy and Felix go off to visit in the country, in order to

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escape a six-foot millionairess who is also pursuing Felix. Miss Tracy is at her best in the country. Lady Mary's establishment, its starvation rations, and, above all, the Protestant Church fête, are really funny: the raffle held under the vicar's nose, with the prize of a free ticket for the diocesan pilgrimage to Fatima and Lourdes for anyone who could stay on the stallion around the paddock, and Tommy's efforts "on behalf of a creed and a class he detested" are slapstick almost worthy of Somerville and Ross.

Adroit and Awkward

GOODBYE EARTH AND OTHER POEMS. By I. A. Richards. Harcourt, Brace. $3.75.

By JANET FISCALINI

THE AUTHOR of "Coleridge on the Imagination" has published a thin, thoughtful, and rather uneven book of poems. As one might have expected, Mr. Richards' concerns are ethical and metaphysical; his points of departure, his arguments are various, but three titles may suggest the range: "Yin and Yang"; "Exit Planet"; "The Status of the Mentionable."

Most often the poems move toward a knowledge of the limits of knowledge; the acquiescence may be wry, or half-mystical, or both. There are echoes of Yeats ("unless . . . that random scene/ re-utter us and all be well"), but not a depressing number. They scarcely hurt the better poems, in which Mr. Richards has a remote and quite delicate voice:

" . . . Where we
(Who are they)
May underhear
Nay, be
Their Colloquy . . . "

The villanelle, "To Dumb Forgetfulness," and other "lyrics" develop tones and moods associated with such acquiescence; thus the book has an agreeable unity of concern.

Individual pieces are witty, graceful, and affecting. I particularly liked "The Status of the Mentionable," with its puns and nice neutrality. "A:B::B:C" considers the Aristotelian and Buddhist concepts of the middle way; the stanza form and the style allude to the seventeenth century—with regret and respect, one supposes. It is perfectly finished. "Rainbow" is bright, agile, and quotable:

"Newton walked to
Stourbridge Fair
And brought his prism
That was to fell the
founding wall
Undo the
All
Renew the
Fall . . .

The net
We knit
To sweep
The deep
Outwit the yet-perchancers
Took with it what else bars
Existlessness.

O sole observer! Only
unobserved! Neglected
Left out
Son of trouble . . . "

The convention is apt to make one think of Empson, but there is not much similarity. These poems are less ambitious, less eccentric, less "difficult." But Mr. Richards succeeds in the mode because of his serious intelligence and his detachment; contemplation of the cosmos does not unsettle his balance.

There are one or two ponderous things, and a few rather wispy exercises, but it is the technique which is most uneven. Three poems may make you wonder whether the author is very adroit or very awkward; twenty are likely to convince you that he is both. The accomplishment is apparent; admirable things are done with the short line. Then one knows, of course, that the mincing iambs of "A Solitary Daffodil" are allusive, that certain skewed sentences, certain almost unspeakable sequences are deliberately constructed. A kind of textural effect is aimed at, or a special relation to the sense or the convention.

But beside the accomplishment and the sophistication one finds unaccountable clumsiness. "When the unthinkable junctures flower," for example, is a series of bumps on a log; the line rhymes with "But, but within all let and lour," where "lour" has little exactness, and "flower" none at all. Anyone interested in mixed metaphor, mixed Yeats, or the relation between the two, should look at the third stanza of "The Throne."

Other specialists may be curious about the footnotes. At least one entry is as charming as Miss Moore's efforts; a few are developments of the classic "A phenomenon which I have often noticed"; the Empsonian type is dominant. I preferred the poems; a respectable proportion are moving and finely made.

By Indirection

THE BRONC PEOPLE. By William Eastlake. Harcourt Brace. $3.95.

By THOMAS F. CURLEY

IN THIS, his second novel, Mr. Eastlake starts with a good story, develops it slightly and then settles for what is merely an amusing and well written book.

The novel begins in New Mexico shortly after World War II. Big Sant Bowman (the brothers in Mr. Eastlake's first novel, *Go In Beauty,* were also Bowmans) had driven his cattle for two days towards the only active water hole in thirty miles. He asks for water and is refused by the Gran Negrito, who owns the hole. The men exchange words, raise their voices, then part, the Gran Negrito to his adobe house and Bowman to the gate of the water hole. The black man then breaks a pane of glass in one of his windows and fires at Bowman. In the gun battle that follows, the Gran Negrito is wounded badly and after a time he is unable to fire any longer. Finally he slips on something, knocks over and breaks a glass-chimneyed kerosene lantern. Bowman, seeing the fire, enters the

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cabin by the front door only seconds before a small boy, the Gran Negrito's son, runs out the back way.

Two Indians, who had been watching the men exchange shots chase the boy, catch him and finally turn him over to the authorities who place him in an orphanage.

More than two years later, while playing a few miles from his house, Little Sant Bowman meets a Negro boy about his own age. Because Little Sant is an only child and likely to remain one, and because the Negro refugee from an orphanage in Albuquerque had been beaten with a two-by-four across the back, Big Sant and his wife decide to keep the boy and not to notify the authorities. His name is Alastair Benjamin and he does not yet know that the man who takes him in and later adopts him is also the man who killed his father.

The part of the story that I have summarized takes up about the first fourth of Mr. Eastlake's novel. I think it is a good story that would be difficult to write and rewarding to read. The chief fault I find in *The Bronc People* is that the story becomes less and less important as the book goes on. I do not mean that Eastlake drops the story entirely, but he does neglect it in favor of a number of characters, interesting enough in themselves, who afford Eastlake too many opportunities to indulge in self-expression.

Among the less serious results of Mr. Eastlake's waywardness was the inclusion of his book in a review of current Westerns. *The Bronc People* is not a Western, although Eastlake is partially to blame for the misapprehension.

A more serious consequence is the damage done not only to the story but also to the main characters. Eastlake's method does not attract the reader's attention to his characters so much as to himself—his attitudes, his opinions, his style.

Action is character. By neglecting his story, Eastlake also neglects his characters. I think the explanation for the lack of delineation of the inner lives of the main characters lies in Eastlake's failure to involve them in the story. We know they are involved but we do not participate in that involvement.

I don't for a minute think that this indirectness is unconscious on Eastlake's part but I am convinced that it is a mistake. For a man who can create a scene so well, Eastlake seems curiously shy of directness as if he were afraid that bad critics might charge him with melodrama.

In conclusion, let me stress that an author's admirers are often his severest, if not his best, critics. And if I cavil at Eastlake's vices for paragraphs and dismiss his virtues in a line or two, the disproportion is a measure not only of my admiration for what he has done but also, and more so, of my eagerness for him to realize all that he is capable of.

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